

Linda Clair
Four-and-a-half-day Meditation Retreat
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File 4c – Saturday afternoon discussion

Question: You have spoken this morning about an explosion when we meditate or we get in a moment. That is the first question. And second question, when people die some people can travel in another dimension but do you think any spirits stay here between us?

Linda: Before they come back into a body?

Question: No, rather your mother or son when they die, later they – the spirit – can be here between us?

Linda: So does the spirit hang around? Is that the question?

Question: Are they here?

Linda: Maybe. I can only talk about my experience with my mother, say. I think that's really one of the few I can talk about. So my mother died on the first day of a retreat I was doing in Australia. I was walking around, and she'd died that morning, and I saw these Kookaburras and that was her. I was walking down a hill and it was like she was there, and then there was another animal and it was like that was her – I really felt her.

And for the first time I felt she understood what I was doing, why I was doing it. It was like she came back and said, "Now I know what you were talking about." And before that she'd never really shown – well, she was scared, she wasn't all that interested in what I was doing with this but I think she was mainly scared. But suddenly it was like, "Ah, so this is what you're talking about." So I felt her off and on for the next few days of the retreat, just felt her around. And then it subsided and I didn't feel her around so much. But then a while later I felt she was around again. But this time it was different – it was like she was trying to hang on to me and attach to me. And that was really what her nature was like when she was alive, she was really quite needy and wanted to attach.

Question: This question is because there are people who say they speak with the spirits. But can they? I have asked myself many times, "Is it true?"

Linda: There might be some truth in it. I went to a psychic in London a few years ago and really what he was saying was stuff that nobody else knew. So I don't know if he was tapping into something in me. He said there was someone there with him who'd been close to me who was watching. I don't know. There is probably some truth in it.

But eventually with my mother I felt I had to go, "No, that's enough." Because I think initially when you die, especially if you haven't done much work on yourself, there is this ecstasy of freedom, this

temporary freedom. But then after that initial ecstasy things start to come back and then, what I feel is that, the unenlightened cells regroup and need to come back into a body. Maybe what she wanted was not to have to go through that all again so she was hanging on to me. That's how it felt. So I needed to sort of separate myself a bit from it.

Question: I discovered a while ago that one of the ways I can fall silent is if I listen to something. So like I'm lying in the bath and if I tune into the sound of the water it's almost like suddenly I disappear and only the sound of the water remains. All thoughts stop. And after I discovered that sometimes the silence descends and the silence isn't silent, it's a bit of a humming. I can prolong it by tuning in to it and listening to that inner hum or sound. Today what I discovered is that that sound is in my head all the time. When there's thinking going on that is in the background. So when I noticed it I was able to tune into it and bring it to the forefront of my attention, and all thinking disappeared. And this was really a happy discovery because it gives me a technique, no matter what else is going on if I can tune into this inner sound it's a way of stopping the thinking. My question to you is can you confirm that if something like this is practiced with dedication, and we spend more and more time in a place where we're not thinking, that we'll arrive at a time where the thinking gives up? Like I think you used the phrase, "subsides and things become much less of an effort." Is this one technique really the path to getting there? Spending more and more time in a zone when you're not thinking?

Linda: Not necessarily. It's really good what you said and it's true, when you're not thinking there is so much more that you hear and you see and it's just amazing, like, "I'm alive!" But it's very tempting to try and use things to stop thinking. And this isn't about just stopping thinking and having no thoughts. It's getting to *the source of the desire to think*, rather than using something to try and stop thinking. It can help to a degree but then it can turn into a form of repression where you are just repressing the thoughts and the thinking. You really need to realise what this thinking process is and why you think. And that's the hard bit because it comes from fear, so you start to feel that fear more strongly. So what you're describing is good to a degree but I wouldn't get too attached to it either. You have to really allow things to come up and not focus on anything to try and exclude something else. You need to include everything including thinking.

Question: I suppose I'm coming from a place of seeing thinking as a bad habit.

Linda: Well, don't see it as a bad habit, just as a deeply ingrained habit.

Question: When I'm in that silence space I'm not trying to exclude the thoughts. I'm trying to hang on to it, but because it's joyful, it's lovely to be in that peace where there isn't thinking.

Linda: But anything you hang on to – and I'm not trying to be a killjoy here – but with anything you hang on to there is a degree of fear there. Because you're scared if you let it go you're going to feel bad again. I'd say if you hang on to it too hard it means that you're scared you're going to lose it.

Question: I suppose I'm thinking it's inevitable that the thinking will return, but isn't it what we're trying to do here? When we notice that we're thinking isn't the effort here to stop thinking?

Linda: No, it's to come back to where you are which is your body. It's to see that the thinking is not real. It's to see clearly *what* thinking is. Eventually you see how useless it is and how ridiculous it is and how it's just taking you around in circles. You need to use something that gradually becomes

more attractive than thinking. And once you start to come into your body, even though it can be uncomfortable, you start to feel like you're waking up from this dream. And it starts to become strangely attractive because it feels much more real than thinking.

Question: I think we're saying the same thing in a different way.

Linda: But you're saying you're trying to stop thinking.

Question: But I did not mean that. I think you saying, "Coming back to the body, coming back to awareness of where you are," is the same as for me when the silence descends. I am not trying to exclude the thinking; I am being wholly present and the thinking disappears. And being present is a joyful experience. It's not like I'm afraid of the thinking coming back – I know it will come back because it's my habit.

Linda: Well, it doesn't need to come back and if you break that habit eventually it does give up.

Question: So my question is, by practicing coming back to the present, in whichever way we do it, that's going towards breaking the habit and it becomes less persistent?

Linda: Yes. You go through periods where it appears to be stronger, there appears to be stronger thoughts, more thoughts. But it's only because you're much clearer and you can see them more clearly. So you have to be careful you don't push them away. It's a delicate balance of pushing them away and trying to stop them and going, "Thinking bad! I shouldn't be doing this." You have to *want* stop, not just go, "Stop, that's bad." You have to actually *want* to stop thinking so something needs to become much more attractive.

Question: What I do is switch attention at that point from thinking to coming back to the present. Because it's such hard work I suppose I'm just seeking reassurance that eventually...

Linda: Well, that's why I'm here. I'm not here to say, "No, that doesn't happen, it's a waste of energy." I'm here to say, "It is possible, it's very, very possible." It's really difficult to have this balance of saying, "Yes, it does take a lot of effort," without making it too heavy and too unattainable and scaring people off. It's hard to make it more attractive to people, but I don't want to say, "Yes, it's easy. You just do this, you leave your thoughts at the door and come in, and it all goes." It's not like that. It does take effort. But I want to balance that by saying it's not all horrible effort – it can be incredible, like you were saying, it can feel amazing. And you need to have those moments to really keep going.

Question: Yes, the first time my mind fell silent it came out of the blue.

Linda: It came out of the blue but it was because of the effort you make. It's not always this cause and effect – well, that's what this is all about – there is no cause and effect. You don't sit and put in all this effort and then at the end of the sit you feel amazing. It will be suddenly you'll feel that – and you might attribute it to looking at the moon in the water or something like that whereas really it's from this. This is laying the foundation and you will feel the results of this. And if you really get into this you will feel results quite quickly but maybe not the sort of thing that you expect you should be feeling. And it will happen out of the blue, and you will be tempted to say it's because of this or that, but it's because of this.

Question: When I'm sitting I have thoughts and intense bodily sensation – you could say fear. And then sometimes I get fed-up with it all and leave that, and then there's a space or I come into my heart. So there's three things going on. So there's a release or a relief or a space. So then I don't know whether I should stay there in the relief space or stay with the bodily sensation. When I come into my body the body seems really tense, so I'm telling myself the fear's not real.

Linda: Doesn't help though does it? Or it does?

Question: Yes, when I say the fear's not real momentarily there's a space. Then I don't know if I should stay with the fear – otherwise it keeps coming back – or I should just stay with the space. I feel like if I focus on that maybe that's more real than anything else.

Linda: Well, if you get a bit of space enjoy it. But as soon as you find yourself really trying to attach to it then come back to your breath. Really do that. Don't try and stay in any one state.

Question: I was thinking I had to stay in the fear.

Linda: No, you don't have to stay in the fear – you don't want to stay in the fear. It will come up when it comes up so don't feel you have to stay in anything, but at the same time don't stay in the space. Feel it, enjoy it, come back to your body, to your breath. Just use your breath to anchor yourself while all these things are happening, but don't feel you have to stay in anything. It will keep changing, everything will keep changing. And the fear does feel very real at times – the fear is scary. Really it's the fear of the fear.

Question: So that's why I'm wondering whether I'm avoiding it by going into the space.

Linda: Well, only you know that. If you feel that maybe you are. But sometimes you do need a bit of a break too so don't be too hard on yourself.

Question: How can I deal with painful memories? There's one episode coming up from childhood, or adolescence, and then the next and the next. And I cry.

Linda: Has that been happening the whole retreat?

Question: No, most of the time there was just strong tension in my body as usual. And I sat with it, as still as I could, and there was a lot of sadness coming up and I cried with that. And then the memories came and they were quite vivid, and short.

Linda: Well, it's good that they were short because that means you couldn't get into one long train of thought. But as soon as you see them, if you can, come back to your body. Just keep doing that. Be really persistent. But probably the reason they've come up more this afternoon is you're tired. When you're tired it's much harder to stay here in your body and things like that are going to come in. So watch your reaction to them, rather than what you're thinking about, just watch your reaction. Your reaction to the thoughts is feeding them. So if there's no reaction there's no reason for the thoughts to come up – that's what feeds the thinking. They're only coming up because you're going, "Oh, that was a horrible experience." The reason we come back to the sensations in the body is that they are a bit less loaded with emotion, usually. You can feel it, you can feel sick

with fear in your stomach, but it's actually preferable to feeling as you're feeling. So you use your sensations to break that emotional reaction. So you're feeling them in your body as sensations and they become a bit less personal, a little bit more neutral. But it will keep happening, particularly when you're tired, and you just have to keep coming back, back, back.

Question: Today I haven't felt a lot of pain, more energy than pain. Yesterday I had that block on my stomach and today it's not there, but a lot of energy went through my body. I don't know why because I don't have thoughts – my thinking is not there – so I don't know where this different pain comes from as I don't have any thinking.

Linda: I do, occasionally.

Question: I don't have any. I'm a hundred per cent attention on my body and the feeling of the energy. But not really no – I hear everything and the feel all pain and the energy. Eighty per cent of the thinking is not there. So I don't think with my brain.

Linda: Well, your brain doesn't think.

Question: I do feel it in my body.

Linda: It's the mind that thinks.

Question: I mostly feel pain in my forehead. Not only when I'm sitting. I have a lot of headaches.

Linda: Can you describe the headaches?

Question: It's like electricity and an acute tension and pain.

Linda: How long have you been getting that?

Question: For the last few months, anytime that I'm sitting the energy and the pain come. And now, energy here on my stomach and pressure in my head. I don't know why.

Linda: Well, the structure of the brain does change doing this. When the thinking does start to subside the brain becomes clearer, there's more space, so in that way you become more intelligent.

Question: I read something trying to understand why I have all these headaches. But it's not for a long time. It comes and goes. And I read it's because one is starting to awake and you feel more and more Kundalini energy coming through and you feel headache because of that.

Linda: I had a lot, really strong, and it felt like it was deep in the head, not on the surface. It would become excruciating at times. Eventually it just went, but it was very, very strong. I can't say for sure but I feel it is things happening in the brain.

Question: After lunch I went to have a nap, a proper siesta. And I couldn't sleep for five or six minutes because of the pressure in my head and the feeling of the energy. As soon as I closed my eyes it started. And that happens as well when I wake up in the morning, it takes me five minutes to get used to that pain and energy and get up.

Linda: Yes, you don't read about it much and I don't talk about it much because I don't want people to say, "Oh, I've got a pain in my head," but yes, I had a lot. If you read Krishnamurti he talks about it quite a bit – he had it very intensely. To me it's a good sign. It's not fun.

Question: It's quite annoying because sometimes I don't know why I'm feeling headache.

Linda: I know my teacher had it and he told a doctor about it once and the doctor sent him for tests and it was all fine. In fact they said there was so little activity it was amazing he was still alive.

Question: I know it's not a brain tumour because I don't have the pain all the time, it comes and goes. Now it happens any time that I sit.

Linda: If you're concerned with anything that's happening go and get it checked – don't attribute everything to this. But for me it happened more when I was sitting, and then suddenly it would go away, and then eventually it started happening when I wasn't sitting as well. But if I sat for long periods it would get quite extreme at times. But eventually it does go.

Question: I can manage it; I'm quite stubborn. But this afternoon it wasn't pain, it was more like energy.

Linda: It is energy.